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FEMINIST METHODOLOGY MATTERS!

Liz Stanley & Sue Wise (2008) in (eds) V. Robinson and D. Richardson *Gender and Women's Studies* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.221-43.

Why Feminist Methodology Matters

What is a chapter on feminist methodology doing in an introduction to Women's Studies? Surely this is much less important than feminist theory, women's history, gender and development...? Anyway, doesn't feminist research mean just learning some simple methods, like how to interview people or produce an ethnography? Methodology is in fact the basis of making good convincing theoretical arguments and of advancing good convincing facts about the social world, so feminist methodology is an absolutely essential and crucial part of Women's Studies.

'Methodology' is a shorthand term for a theoretical or practical idea to be explored together with a set of procedural tools which specify how it is to be investigated - including what is appropriate and also sufficient evidence for doing so and how this should be produced, what counts as good arguments about this evidence, and what conclusions can be justifiably drawn from this. Considerations of feminist methodology have been an important part of Women's Studies and engaged the energies of successive generations of feminist scholars. Methodology encourages us to ask interesting and important questions about, for example, what makes an idea feminist or not, what is the best way to investigate the things that Women's Studies is concerned with, and which theory or research can we trust – and which should we be sceptical of or even reject. Feminist methodology matters because it enables us to ask and also begin to answer such questions.

Debates about feminist methodology have been central to Women's Studies since the late 1970s. Sara Delamont (2002: 60-1) notes that "None of the attempts by feminists to

reinstate founding mothers, or enthrone contemporary women thinkers have captured the attention... in the way methodological debates have”, pointing out that “Over-arching these debates are very serious methodological and epistemological disputes about the very nature of research”. We agree: while questions of methodology are often presented in a purely technical way in mainstream textbooks, at root methodology is concerned with the fundamentally important matter of the ‘getting of knowledge’. As Women's Studies has long recognised, feminist methodology matters because it is the key to understanding the relationship between knowledge/power and so it has epistemological reverberations. It also provides important tools for helping to produce a better and more just society, and so it has political and ethical reverberations too.

So, what do the key terms we have used so far mean? ‘Research’ involves investigating something in depth, in theoretical and abstract as well as substantive and grounded ways. A ‘method’ is a systematic procedure for collecting information relevant to a topic being investigated. ‘Methodology’ involves harmonizing theoretical ideas, choices of methodology and procedures for doing research. And ‘epistemology’ is a theory of knowledge, in which what is seen as knowledge, who are thought to be accredited ‘knowers’, the definition of facts, and ways of evaluating competing knowledge-claims, are specified. Feminist methodology is at the heart of the feminist project of changing the world, because it is the focal point for bringing together theory, practical research methods, and the production of new knowledge. Feminist methodology matters!

Some useful overviews of the key ideas of, and debates about, feminist methodology have been published (Hesse-Bieber and Yaiser 2004, Letherby 2003, Ramazanoglu with Holland 2002, Reinharz 1992). However, one of the problems with even the best textbook discussions is that they focus on debates about feminist methodology that occurred some years ago now, and/or they discuss methodology in an abstract way. What they rarely do is

look in any depth at ‘real world research’ carried out by feminist researchers using in their own particular ways a feminist methodology (as argued by Wise & Stanley 2003). This is what our chapter does, explore real world feminist research and ‘feminist methodology’ in action.

The chapter’s aims are to show that carrying out feminist research is a complicated business, to emphasise that there is no single ‘right way’ to do feminist research, to point out that the core ideas of feminist methodology can be put into practice very differently but in ways that are still feminist, and to convey how wide-ranging and truly global are the concerns of feminist research. It starts by explaining the importance of close, in-depth analytical reading as the basic tool of all feminist methodology, and explores how to devise a ‘reading frame’ to ensure consistency and enable valid comparisons across a range of comparator writings. It then shows in detail how this works, by using our own reading frame to ‘compare and contrast’ a number of exemplars of feminist research writing. ‘Exemplars’ does not mean that these are exemplary or near-perfect examples, but that they are useful examples of ‘research of their kind’. We have chosen exemplars across all of the main methods of researching a topic – ethnography, interviewing, documentary research, surveys, auto/biographical research, and theoretical work. Some of these research texts are historical while others are contemporary, the authors come from Australia, Germany, Kenya, New Zealand, the UK and the US, and their topics involve a wide range of countries and ethnic and gender configurations.

Reading Real-World Feminist Research

Academic publications, including feminist ones, are produced from a wide range of often disagreeing viewpoints. Evaluating these in terms of whether the reader agrees or disagrees with their contents can mean that work is criticised or even rejected just because it

expresses a perspective different from the reader's. Consequently a more defensible and more feminist way of reading needs to be found; our preferred way of doing this is to use a 'reading frame', a structured set of points, to think systematically about examples of actual research. Doing this makes evaluations of research transparent and provides a coherent basis for comparing a number of examples. Our reading frame is concerned with how and to what extent the examples of feminist research we go on to discuss use key ideas associated with feminist methodology:

- 0 Social location: knowledge is necessarily constructed from where the researcher/theoretician is situated, and so feminist knowledge should proceed from the location of the feminist academic and work outwards from this.
- 0 Groundedness and specificity: all knowledge is developed from a point of view, and all research contexts are grounded and specific, and therefore the knowledge-claims which feminist researchers make should be modest and recognise their particularity and specificity.
- 0 Reflexivity: producing accountable feminist knowledge requires analytical means of looking reflexively at the processes of knowledge production, rather than bracketing or dismissing such things as unimportant in epistemological terms.

There are different ways that a reading frame could be devised for evaluating the methodological aspects of feminist research. For instance, readers could comb through books and articles (or even just one, if this is thought very good) which discuss feminist methodology, listing the most important points made. These could then be put in a logical order and used to evaluate research by considering the extent to which it follows these criteria or not. Something similar could be produced by 'brain-storming' to compile a list of topics which readers think should characterise good feminist methodology. A reading frame could

also be developed by reading books and articles which discuss feminist methodology, but this time by listing the things which readers *disagree* with and then re-writing these negatives into positive statements – often the ideas we disagree with can help us think better and more productively than those we agree with. The reading frame used in this chapter is a simple one which:

- Ø provides a summary of the content and methodology of each research text and points the reader to key sections concerned with methodology matters;
- Ø discusses the overall approach to methodology in each example;
- Ø examines the relationship between its questions, analysis, conclusions and discussions of the processes of feminist enquiry;
- Ø considers how feminism is deployed within the text and whether it matters if some of the ideas associated with feminist methodology are absent;
- Ø discusses the light thrown on important methodological issues by considering some comparator examples of feminist research; and
- Ø indicates how readers might develop the ideas discussed and questions asked.

Reading the Research Exemplars

The exemplars of feminist research we discuss raise interesting questions about the methodological aspects of ‘feminists researching’. In addition, the Bibliography provides short overviews of three more examples of research which used a similar methodological approach to each of the five exemplars – these have been chosen because they ‘do it differently’ from the exemplar, because it is important to recognise that ‘good feminist research’ can be done in sometimes very different ways.

ETHNOGRAPHY EXAMPLE: Marjorie Shostak (1981) *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*

Nisa investigates women's lives among the gatherer-hunter !Kung people who live on the northern edge of the Kalahari desert. This is explored in particular through the ideas and viewpoints of fifty year old Nisa, in interviews covering Nisa's childhood, family life, sex, marriage childbirth, lovers, ritual and healing, loss and growing older.

Methodology:

- □ Twenty months of ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the late 1970s, plus interviews with eight women in addition to Nisa herself
- □ Its particular interest is in cultural differences and also 'the universals, if any', of human emotional life
- □ Consists of fifteen thematically edited interviews, around thirty hours of taped conversations, between Nisa and Shostak carried out over a two week period
- □ Nisa is described as having articulated highly organised and rich stories with a clear beginning, middle and end
- □ Focuses on Nisa's words and stories and omits Shostak's part in the interviews in asking and responding to questions
- □ Shostak has edited the interviews, so the chronological sequence of the thematic narratives does not necessarily reflect the order in which stories were told in the interviews

Methodology reading:

'Introduction', 1-43

'Epilogue', 345-71

Marjorie Shostak's (1981) *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* provides an interesting and informative account of the lives and experiences of !Kung women through the lens of her interviews with woman, Nisa. This is an engaging read, in which Shostak discusses her fieldwork generally and in particular her meetings with Nisa, and readers come to share Shostak's fascination with Nisa's character and the extent to which the stories she told in her interviews are representative or not of !Kung women generally. In addition, there is a full discussion of confidentiality and consent and the strategies used to analyse the

identity of the group and Nisa as an individual, as well as concerning the location where these !Kung people lived. The overall impression is of *Nisa* as a very open text with methodology matters dealt with fully. However, the important matters of Shostak's involvement as interlocutor and co-discussant in the interviews, and the role that possible by-standers played, plus details of how the interviews were translated and edited under the thematic headings used in *Nisa*, are dealt with fairly cursorily. These important methodological omissions have enormous implications for how readers understand the interpretation of Nisa's stories. Two further criticisms have been made of *Nisa* as well.

The first concerns Shostak's comment that she is interested in cultural differences and 'the universals, if any', of human emotional life. This led to the charge, incorrectly, that Shostak was suggesting that biology determines social behaviour across cultural difference and proposing an essentialist argument. The second criticism is that Nisa could have had little if any idea about what giving consent to publication in a book actually meant. However, it is difficult to reconcile this criticism, based on the assumption of Nisa's naiveté or lack of knowledge, with interviews in the book in which she comes across as very savvy, and also with the details subsequently provided by Shostak (2000) in *Return to Nisa*.

An interesting methodological and ethical question is raised here: are uneducated, third-world or otherwise disempowered research subjects 'by definition' unable to give knowing consent? In thinking about this, readers should look at the overviews of the comparators for *Nisa* and also read the sections referenced on methodology matters. These three comparators are all ethnographies, but deal with the relationship between researcher and researched in different ways.

Diane Bell's (1983) *Daughters of the Dreaming* has also been criticised regarding the 'knowing consent' issue, although Bell fully discusses this matter. Because Aboriginal women's and men's knowledges are kept separate and secret from each other, the assumption

has been the women in her research did not fully realise what they were consenting to. Was Bell perhaps naïve about consent? There are however other possible explanations: perhaps the women concerned gave their consent while other community members objected, perhaps it was men who objected rather than women, perhaps the women were constrained after the event to rescind consent, and so on. Such ethical matters are a burning issue for Judith Stacey's (1991) *Brave New Families*, where the ethical complications that arise in her ethnography are treated as discrediting the method, rather than being something that 'just happens' in any long-term research, or perhaps produced by the relationships established by a particular researcher. *Brave New Families* is actually a sociological departure from 'typical' ethnography, and Stacey participating in people's lives as a kind of acquaintance or friend is likely to have increased the possibility that these issues would arise. Sallie Westwood's (1984) *All Day Every Day* is also by a sociologist, but is a 'shopfloor' ethnography by someone who worked in the factory she writes about. Her relationship with her co-workers is different again, involving her and them in common activities and common cause vis a vis management.

Are some research methods 'in themselves' more exploitative than others? This is the implication of *Brave New Families* and Stacey's associated writings about ethnography. After going through the ethnography readings suggested in the Bibliography, readers might want to list the different factors to take into account, concerning the researcher/researched relationship, whether what people say and do is fully recorded or only summarised, how matters of consent and confidentiality are handled, who decides on the final form that publications take, and then compare the different research examples. It is important both to be clear about how 'exploitation' and 'ethics' are defined, and to think about whether it is the method, or whether it is the particular practice of it, that has such characteristics.

INTERVIEWING EXAMPLE: Catherine Kohler Riessman (1990) *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships*

Divorce Talk focuses on how women and men talk about making sense of divorce, what led to it, and their lives afterwards. It discusses their recognition that, although divorce is difficult, it is not all bad and that 'interpretive work' helps. It also deals with the processes which people go through in reconstituting the past of their marriages and the end of these. Regarding selves, men and women make different sense of their divorces, remember their marriages differently, and interact with the researcher differently too.

Methodology:

- □ Began as a survey of divorce adaption patterns in a joint research project with a psychiatrist colleague
- □ Taped interviews were carried out with fifty-two women and fifty-two men, all divorced or not living with their spouses, chosen to be representative of the wider population of people going through marital dissolution
- □ 'Hearing' what people did in the interviews, in which they multiply departed from structured questions and interactions, led Reissman to her intensive narrative study of how people made sense of their experiences in these interviews
- □ Focuses on four narrative genres (story, habitual, hypothetical and episodic), so as to provide detailed interpretive readings of the interview materials
- □ These are transcribed in a detailed (but not conversation analytic) way
- □ Long segments of shared talk are provided, including Riessman's part in this, marked up to show the narrative structures perceived in them

Methodology reading:

'Preface', ix-xiv

'The Teller's Problem: Four Narrative Accounts of Divorce', 74-119

'A Narrative About Methods', 221-30

Catherine Kohler Riessman's (1990) *Divorce Talk: Women and Men Make Sense of Personal Relationships* provides an accessible and engaging account of this research and the ideas underpinning the analysis, including an explanation of the change that occurred in its methodological and analytical direction. Why narrative analysis was adopted is discussed, as are the specific ways it was used, through providing detailed examples using sections of

original data. Its research questions, the analysis and the arguments drawn from these, and also the processes of research and its evolving methodological framework, are all fully accounted for. *Divorce Talk* situates itself in relation to feminist scholarship on marriage and the family and structural gender inequalities, and it also comments on the impact of the women's movement regarding marriage and what is seen as acceptable or not within it. Interestingly, however, its approach as feminist methodology remains implicit in the choice of topic, questions asked, analysis carried out and arguments developed, rather than being explicitly stated. Does *Divorce Talk* use a feminist methodology or not?

This raises the interesting methodological (and political) question of what to call research that employs some or all of the characteristics of feminist methodology but does not use 'the F word' as an explicit characterisation of its approach. In thinking about this, readers should look at the overviews of the comparators for *Divorce Talk* and read the sections referenced on methodology matters. These comparators all use an interview method, but structure their interviews and analyse their data in very different ways and also make different kinds of knowledge-claims.

Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel's (1989) *Three Swahili Women: Life Histories From Mombasa, Kenya* has an even more tacit relationship to feminist methodology. Its key concern is with making visible the lives of Swahili women in Mombasa, in a context where there was almost no published literature: a 'breaking silence' motivation that has underpinned much feminist research. This, together with Mirza and Strobel's emphasis on publishing for a Swahili-speaking as well as US readership, the authors' equal partnership in producing the published book, and Strobel's institutional location in Women's Studies as well as History, strongly implies that their research was consonant with aspects of feminist methodology - however, this is nowhere explicitly stated. Jayne Ifekwunigwe's (1998) *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of 'Race', Nation and Gender* is similarly concerned with

‘giving voice’, in this case to ‘mixed race’ women whose lives were previously little researched. It assumes a feminist or at least pro-women readership and was certainly marketed by its publisher in this way. However, while it describes itself as a feminist auto-ethnography, feminism is not discussed, suggesting some ambivalence. It might be supposed that Ann Oakley’s (1974) *The Sociology of Housework* would help resolve where the boundaries between an explicit and implicit feminist methodology are, but in fact it confirms how complex these boundaries can be. The background is the Women’s Movement, gender inequalities, the recognition of sexism in sociology and other social sciences, and Oakley’s concern with domestic labour as *work* and the gender dynamics governing it. However, *The Sociology of Housework* describes itself as carrying out a sociological analysis rather than a feminist one; it characterises feminism simply as a perspective which keeps women in the mind’s forefront; while its research design, concern with a representative sample, and its analysis of the interview data and utilisation of significance testing on small numbers, are strongly ‘scientific’.

While certainly feminist research, *The Sociology of Housework* does not employ a feminist methodology, while the statuses of *Divorce Talk* and *Three Swahili Women* are harder to pin down. Readers here should think about whether they agree with our assessment or not, because of course this ‘all depends’ on how feminist methodology is being defined.

DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH EXAMPLE: Janet Finch (1983) *Married to the Job*

Married to the Job explores what happens when women marry into their husband's occupations. It suggests this typically involves a two-way process - men's work imposes structures on wives, and wives directly contribute to the work men do. The extent and character of this varies by occupation, in a pattern termed ‘incorporation’.

Methodology: _

- ☐ A documentary and secondary analysis of relevant pre-existing research
- ☐ Specifies the conceptual starting point to enable other researchers to evaluate

the analysis pursued, because different starting points and different questions could have been validly chosen

- □ Uses four main sources for a secondary analysis of published research: research which directly addresses wives' relationship to men's work in particular occupations, studies of occupations from which wives' incorporation can be gleaned, studies of family and marriage with enough on men's work to draw some conclusions of wives' relation to it, and self-reported material generated by organisations representing particular occupations
- □ Explores the different forms of incorporation and accounts for the underlying processes
- □ Uses 'special cases' rather than common experiences to show what forms of incorporation are possible, not just those which are typical
- □ Provides overviews of its approach and analysis in the three parts of the book, on how men's work structures wives' lives, on wives' contributions to men's work, and the theoretical framework for analysing wives' incorporation

*Methodology reading:*__

‘Introduction’, 1-19

‘Introduction to Part One’, 21-3

‘Introduction to Part Two’, 75-7

‘Introduction to Part Three’, 121-3

Janet Finch’s (1983) *Married To the Job* is a clearly written and engaging discussion of a topic, wives’ incorporation into men’s work, which is important for the feminist analysis of marriage and women’s labour market participation. It involves documentary research – its data are pre-existing documents rather than interviews or participant observation and so on – and in particular these are secondary sources, mainly academic research concerned with the same topic and questions that Finch herself is. It provides an exemplary account of its methods, spelling out its research questions and what it sets out to do, then discussing the details of this and what the sources tell, and also overviewing what conclusions can be drawn from the data sources used.

Married To the Job asks feminist questions, its analysis of its sources has these questions clearly in mind and its conclusions about the mechanisms of incorporation are similarly incontrovertibly feminist ones. At the same time, it contains few methodological

details on the research process engaged in, the issues in working with secondary sources and any methodological or political deficiencies these might have. Also Finch is interested in a specific group of women, those who are incorporated into men's work, and the many women who do not have 'incorporated' marriages lie outside the investigation. Relatedly, the group who were 'incorporated' will have included women who resisted or rebelled against this, but there is no discussion of this because the analytical concern is not with 'women's lives' or 'the complexities of marriage and work', but rather the mechanisms by which incorporation is lived out, so that complexities and fractures also lie outside the focus of investigation.

This again raises the question of whether it matters if some features of feminist methodology criteria are not present when others, equally important, are. *Married to the Job* is a good piece of feminist research and the clarity with which it explains its research methods is highly commendable. At the same time, some of the current hallmarks of feminist methodology are absent from its pages and also from its research process, and it is interesting to think about why this might be so. The reasons are likely to include personal preference, the fact that in the early 1980s there was no normative expectation of what feminist methodology 'ought' to consist of, and that feminist research with policy concerns even now tends to be more 'mainstream' in its approach and presentation. We also think the use of secondary analysis of documentary materials is important, because both the context and depth of an investigation can be lost when published research reports become the analytic focus. Is this inevitable when doing documentary research, or is it perhaps a feature of secondary analysis? Reading our comparator examples we think will suggest the latter.

At this point, readers should look at the three comparators for Finch's research and read the recommended sections on methodology. The comparators all use documentary materials (one uses interview material as well) and some secondary sources, while none of them focuses exclusively on these in the way *Married To the Job* does.

Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall's (1987) *Family Fortunes* is a highly influential 'mainstream' piece of UK historical research which also has clear feminist analytical questions and aims. It uses some secondary materials (the historical Census), used alongside personal and family papers in building an in-depth account of some families and their female and male members in three different places, to explore similarities and differences. Hilary Lapsley's (1999) *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women*, a biography of the relationship of Mead and Benedict and their friendship network, is similarly 'mainstream' in its approach and writing style. It utilises some secondary sources (published biographies and autobiographies), but its primary sources are newly-available collections of letters and these provide considerable depth this reading of women's lives and relationships. Dorothy Smith's (1999) *Writing the Social* is concerned with organisational documents of different kinds. Smith does not use their contents as a proxy for people's actual behaviours, but as an indication to the concerns and ways of recording of the organisations involved, while her clearly articulated 'method of inquiry' locates it within a feminist methodology of considerable sophistication which situates the researcher as a knowing subject at its centre.

Finch's choice of secondary analysis, rather than working with documents as such, importantly impacted on the focus of her investigation, what is discussed and what is not, and the rather distanced stance adopted regarding matters of feminist methodology. Readers should look for some more examples of feminist research that carries out a secondary analysis of existing data, to see whether these are similar to or different from *Married To the Job* concerning the discussion or absence of feminist methodology matters. It would also be interesting to do this with other feminist research published in the early 1980s, to explore how important the conventions of the time might have been in influencing the authorial 'voice' Finch writes in.

SURVEY EXAMPLE: Shere Hite (1981) *The Hite Report On Male Sexuality*

The Hite Report On Male Sexuality sees male sexuality as a microcosm of US society: male sexuality is central to the definition of masculinity and masculinity is central to the 'world-view' of US culture. The investigation uses a specially designed kind of survey approach. It aims to provide a new cultural interpretation of male sexuality, including by radically reworking how a questionnaire is designed and redefining how 'sex' and 'male sexuality' are understood.

Methodology:

- □ Over 7,200 questionnaires from US men aged 13-79 were collected and analysed, relating their sexual behaviours and feelings to their wider view of themselves, women and society
- □ Uses a written 'essay-type' questionnaire very different from the usual design of questionnaires, and encourages the participating men to reflect on and depart from its questions and to write about these in detail if they wish
- □ Rejects conventional definitions of 'representative' samples, but also emphasises that there is a close fit between its sample and the US male population aged 18+
- □ Points out that patterns in men's responses occur across socio-economic groupings, and interprets these patterns as a matter of 'character', rather than the product of class or race
- □ Readers are provided with unfolding sequences of lengthy quotations from a number of particular men, adding depth and complexity to discussion of the range of responses to questions
- □ At points the report combines responses to different questions for particular men, showing how behaviours, ideas and feelings were linked for them

Methodology reading:

'Preface,' xiii-xix

'Questionnaire IV', xxi-xxxiii

'Who answered the questionnaire: population statistics and methodology', 1055-7

'Towards a new methodology in the social sciences', 1057-60

Shere Hite's (1981) *The Hite Report On Male Sexuality* is one of a series of books published from 1977 on investigating links between women's unequal position in US society and sexual behaviours and feelings (usefully overviewed in Hite 2006). Hite's research utilises survey research and large-scale datasets, but radically departs from conventional 'scientific' ideas about how to achieve a representative sample, the structure and organisation

of a questionnaire, how research should be carried out, and the kind of analysis which ought to result. The research for *On Male Sexuality* started in 1974, at a time when it took considerable courage to carry out feminist research concerned with men (the orthodoxy was that, to be feminist, research must focus on women). It clearly demonstrates that a survey can be feminist in its process and methodology, not just regarding its questions and conclusions, and also that it need not conform to mainstream positivist or foundationalist methodological thinking to have social impact. *On Male Sexuality* is interested not only in general patterns, but also in variations in responses from sample members, while mainstream survey research tends to treat such variations as insignificant 'ends' and discuss only majority responses. It is also concerned with exploring linked responses from some men across the questions, as part of interpreting and making sense of their written responses.

At this point, readers will find it helpful to look at the overviews of the three comparators for Hite's book, all of which use 'numbers', although in different ways, with relevant sections on methodology referenced in the Bibliography. The methodological question we are interested in here concerns whether a feminist survey and use of large-scale datasets can be feminist in its *process*, not just its questions and conclusions, or whether surveys are by definition positivist. For many people, surveys and other large-scale datasets are seen as inherently in conflict with the ideas of feminist methodology. We do not agree: any research can be foundationalist, for this depends on how a method is put into practice and the claims made about the information it provides, and not the method itself. *On Male Sexuality* shows that the feminist use of a survey approach can radically re-work what this is and put a feminist methodology fully into practice within it. It is also important here to realise that the now dominant understanding of 'a survey' is actually fairly recent: until post-WWII, the term meant providing a general overview of a field of inquiry and did not necessarily include numbers, let alone those produced through a questionnaire asked of a random

representative sample.

Clementina Black's (1915/1938) *Married Women's Work* is an early feminist example of survey research to provide an overview, in this case of women's labour market and household work, with the same approach used in other Women's Industrial Council's investigations. The reports in *Married Women's Work* contain different kinds of data, some numerical and generalised to whole groups, some more focused and originating from particular women and groups. Diana Gittins' (1982) *Fair Sex* uses the UK's 1921 and 1931 Censuses to show the considerable downturn in family size that occurred. However, this kind of data cannot explain *why* many people changed their behaviour, only that the change is a demonstrable fact, although Gittins' interview and case study data does enable her to explain why it happened: these women were able to change their husbands' behaviours, as well as their own, because better employment provided them with greater equality. Census data and the large-scale datasets resulting from random sample surveys convincingly show broad trajectories of behaviours; but while having breadth about matters of 'what', they do not provide the depth necessary for explaining the 'why' questions Gittins is interested in. However, are there circumstances in which 'what' should override 'why', in the name of feminist politics? Diane Russell's (1982/1990) *Rape in Marriage* investigates an important feminist topic, the rape of women by their husbands or partners, asks feminist questions about this, and its analysis has firmly in mind the need to change the prevailing view that such things do not happen or are not particularly important. It is also insistent that a mainstream random sample survey is essential for making valid generalisations that will influence policy-makers.

Since the early 1980s, it has become a truism in 'sensitive' and policy-related areas of feminist research that such research has to be rigorously mainstream in everything but investigating feminist topics and asking feminist questions about them, or it will not be seen

as scientifically valid and so will not have the desired impact. This begs interesting questions about why policy changes come about and whether it is academic research findings, or more complex sets of factors, including the media and well-placed political sponsorship, that produce change. In thinking about the issues here, readers should think about their own response to survey research, and consider why the split exists between ‘born-again’ feminist survey research in policy areas and the more generally negative response in Women’s Studies about numerical analysis. Also, might there be a middle ground, with Hite’s approach providing a way forward consonant with feminist methodology? And if this is so, then why don’t other feminist survey researchers try harder to include feminist methodology?

AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL EXAMPLE: Frigga Haug and Others (1983) *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*

Female Sexualization combines the investigation/analysis/theorisation of the self-construction of normative expectations concerning ‘female sexualization’ and women’s body experiences, carried out by members of a socialist feminist network in late 1970s/early 1980s Germany. It involves the collective engagement by network members with the idea and practice of ‘memory-work’, including exploring memory practices and then speaking together analytically about these.

Methodology: _

- □ Refuses the ‘theory/research’ binary as well as the ‘subjectivity/objectivity’ and ‘researcher/subjects’ binaries
- □ Insists that the object of feminist research has to be the researcher as the vehicle for interpretation, analysis, theorising
- □ Produces a collective analysis of women’s socialisation as sexualised beings through memory-work as a means of disrupting the taken-for-granted, so as to better interpret memory practices
- □ Focuses on themes connected with the body, using written memories of past events which are not treated as ‘objective fact’ but as examples of socialisation as an active process involving the self
- □ Argues that the collective process is fundamental to memory-work and has to be made visible in writing – writing is not separate from analysis or theory
- □ Re-works theory as a usable language which meshes with everyday narratives

Methodology reading:

‘Translator’s Foreword’, 11-19
‘Preface to English Edition’, 21-32
‘Introduction’, 29-32
‘Memory work’, 33-72

Frigga Haug et al’s (1983) *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory* departs from many of the conventions for doing and writing about feminist research. Within *Female Sexualization*, the researcher is both subject and object of analytical attention, and this ‘researcher’ is actually a collective group, engaged in a collective co-process of talking, thinking, analysing and also writing about all this. Moreover, theory is not seen as separate from these grounded research activities and is treated as part of narrativising the processes of female sexualization and then analysing and writing about this – in effect, theory is ‘methodologised’ by the group. And as these comments will indicate, writing is seen as fully a part of research; indeed, the close relationships insisted upon by the collective could be expressed as ‘writing-as-research/as-theory’. The basis of this extremely interesting research and writing project is the conviction that the lives and experiences of the co-researchers, but, more precisely and importantly, their *collective* interrogation, analysis and interpretation of these, should be as central to emancipatory research as they are to emancipatory politics.

Does feminist methodology require treating the researcher in this way? That is, must the feminist researcher always be the combined subject/object in any reflexive engagement with the specific topic or focus of a piece of research, as Haug et al imply? While *Female Sexualization* is fascinating and extremely insightful, we do not think that all versions of feminist research reflexivity need to take this specific form. And at this point, readers should look at the overviews of the three comparators for *Female Sexualization*, all of which use auto/biography (Stanley 1992) and/or memory work as an important tool of feminist methodology. The methodological question we shall explore in relation to them concerns

how they use ideas about reflexivity.

Carolyn Steedman's (1986) *Landscape For a Good Woman* deals with the 'disruptive narratives' told by her mother, concerning the lives of herself and her two daughters. This is the focus both for its own sake and because it provides an analytical route into the untold stories of working class women and girls more generally. The result is what *Landscape For a Good Woman* refers to as a 'non-celebratory case study' regarding class and gender, an in-depth focus on specific lives in order to tell a different kind of story, an analytically and politically informed story about working class women. *Landscape For a Good Woman*, then, is reflexively engaged and multiply traverses the researcher/researched line, but in a very different way from *Female Sexualization*. Ruth Linden's (1993) *Making Stories, Making Selves* too is very reflexively aware and engaged, but also fully aware that 'the point' of her research concerns the people who lived through the Shoah and how to respond to its aftermaths. Reflexivity in *Making Stories, Making Selves* is concerned with important matters of ethics, emotion and interpretation in researching a topic so sensitive on all levels as interviews with people who survived the Nazi concentration camps, and it demonstrates that reflexivity is at the heart of interpretation and is neither an optional extra nor an indulgence. Rebecca Campbell's (2002) *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape* is centrally concerned with the emotional impact on people who work with rape survivors and the importance of them 'doing things' to ameliorate the potentially damaging effects in order to better help others. It provides a thoughtful and insightful investigation of the relationship between intellectual thought and human emotion within feminist research which treats emotion as capable of rational inquiry, and something that can be shaped and used rather than being outside of people's control. The origins of *Emotionally Involved* lie in Campbell's long-term experiences in rape crisis work and is a reflexive project engaged in by someone who is both researcher and worker. While more 'mainstream' in its presentation than the

other auto/biographical texts discussed here, Campbell and the rape crisis workers interviewed are effectively co-researchers within the project. The research also has direct implications for how people can best learn to ‘handle’ powerful emotional reactions to such upsetting things as rape, and so it has some of the attributes of action research as well.

Is it always important to write about the emotional component of research – or might there be circumstances when this would detract from the importance of the research topic? It is also useful to remember the range of meanings that the term ‘reflexivity’ has – in some feminist research, it has been reduced to locating the researcher as a person, while the examples we have provided here all treat reflexivity much more analytically. Readers might also find it useful to pick one or two examples of mainstream/malestream research and think about whether researcher reflexivity and/or the role of emotion in research are discussed in these, if so in what ways, and how this compares with how the examples of feminist research discussed here do so.

THEORY EXAMPLE: Judith Butler ([1990] 1999 with New Preface) *Gender Trouble*

Gender Trouble contends that a pervasive assumption about heterosexuality in 1990s (implicitly, US) feminist theory restricted the meaning of gender to then-current ideas about masculinity and femininity. It explores how non-normative sexual practices can question the stability of gender as a category of analysis. It also outlines a theory of performativity, that gender is ‘manufactured’ through sustained sets of social acts organised through the gendered stylization of the body. However, it rejects applying this to the psyche, seeing some aspects of internality as ‘given’ and lying beyond (or beneath) the social.

Methodology:

- □ A theoretical exposition, written mainly in an ‘it is so’ and apparently removed and detached authorial voice
- □ Its argument is structured in a mainly critical mode, by interrogating the ideas advanced in other people’s theoretical writings, particularly ones which have been important in a US academic context
- □ It proposes that feminist theoretical discussion relates to feminist politics through parody and subversion and the deconstruction of the terms in which identity is articulated

- □ 'I' is used mainly in the 1999 Preface and Conclusion to disavow notions of fixed self or identity, with 'author identity' similarly questioned.

Methodology reading:

'Preface' (1999), vii-xxvi??

'Preface' (1990) xxvii-xxiv??

Readers may be surprised to find theory included among discussions of feminist methodology, because theory and research are often treated as binaries, as alternative ways of working. However, substantive research or investigation which is 'ideas free' is, quite simply, bad research; and any theoretical investigation that does not have a coherent basis to its use of argument, evidence, interpretation and conclusion (that is, a good methodology) is deficient theory. Theorising has a methodological frame which links evidence, arguments and conclusions by, typically, using other people's ideas or writings as used as the source or data, but usually without explaining why have been selected for commentary and others not (see Thompson 1996).

Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* is a much cited influential theorisation of the socially constructed and performative nature of gender, a topic absolutely central to the feminist analysis of gender relations and how to achieve social change in a move 'from parody to politics', as Butler puts it. How can ideas about feminist methodology be used to think about feminist theory? And wherein does the feminism of *Gender Trouble* lie and is this similar to or different from other important works of feminist theory?

The underlying assumptions about the gender order and the 'speculative questions' that *Gender Trouble* addresses, also its topic and its conclusions emphasising the implications for feminist politics, all mark this as a feminist text. At the same time, it is written in a very opaque way, utilises an 'it is so' authorial voice that inhibits readers from answering back,

and uses the work of other feminists in a mainly critical way. What results is a fairly closed text, in the sense that it provides few means for readers to engage with or dispute its arguments – it has a strong ‘take it or leave it’ quality. For many people, this is what high-class social theory ‘is’ by definition, and clearly many feminist readers have responded positively to its combination of content and authorial ‘voice’. However, there is little which indicates its engagement with any of the ideas of feminist methodology. Relatedly, it positions the reader very much outside of the text, as a recipient of it, rather than someone who should or could directly engage with it. It is important to ask, then, whether feminist theory necessarily positions the reader in this way - is this the textual politics of all theory and so an inevitable aspect of the feminist variant, or can – perhaps even should – feminist theory be different?

At this point, readers should look at the overviews of the three comparators for Butler’s text and read the sections on methodology referenced in the Bibliography. They are extremely influential examples of feminist theory, having a major impact when published and in the case of Woolf’s *Three Guineas* for many decades after as well. All three have different approaches from *Gender Trouble*, regarding the open or closed character of the text, how it positions readers, and related matters of feminist methodology. Readers at this point might want to contemplate what they think that ‘theory’ consists of. Does theory need to be difficult to read, can it be fiction or fictionalised, must it be abstract and without detailed content? Also, crucially important, should feminist theory be different and embody at least some of the principles of feminist methodology?

bell hooks’ (1984) *Feminist Theory* shares some important characteristics with *Gender Trouble*: it proceeds from critiquing other people’s ideas, and its authorial ‘voice’ is a declaratory one stating a position rather than persuading an active reader. Its message is a moral as well as political one about white feminists and it is difficult to find a way of arguing

back that does not seem like rejecting the importance of racism. However, other writing by the author, in 'real life' Gloria Watkins, comments that the pseudonym 'bell hooks' was adopted specifically for her to engage in passionate polemics. Therefore the reader who is aware of this knows that texts by bell hooks are writings of a polemical kind, with the relationship of readers to these that of an appreciative (or unappreciative) audience, rather than having any detailed engagement with them. R.W. Connell's *Masculinities*, by contrast, is written in a processual way that takes readers through the process of enquiry that the author engaged in. It also provides many examples from around the world to put across its points, and discusses work by other people in a positive way, by deploying their arguments within the developing framework of this theorisation of masculinities. The result is that readers are continually encouraged to engage with the ideas being worked out and discussed. Readers are even more directly addressed in Virginia Woolf's (1983) *Three Guineas*, because the reader is a proxy for a man Woolf writes three fictionalised letters to. The addressee becomes the reader, who is not only engaged with, but their possible responses to her comments are anticipated by Woolf and she responds to these in a thoughtful and respectful and also very witty way. Woolf's reader is not only engaged with, but is also treated as someone important and to be persuaded and entertained.

A good next step here is for readers to think about these matters concerning their favourite (and/or most disliked) works of feminist theory. Here whether their writing styles are open and processual or closed and declaratory, if readers are encouraged to be responsive and engage with the ideas and arguments presented, and also whether the authors explicitly engage with any important components of feminist methodology, are all useful things to consider.

Reading Research Writing Methodologically

The aims of this chapter have been to show that carrying out feminist research is a complicated business, to emphasise that there is no single ‘right way’ to do feminist research, to point out that feminist methodology can be put into practice very differently but in ways that are still feminist, and to convey the wide-ranging concerns of feminist research. In doing these things, we have used a reading frame for looking in detail at the methodological aspects of five exemplars of feminist research and fifteen more comparators to these, a reading frame which not only provides a transparent set of themes for evaluating this work but also encourages research writing to be read and compared in a systematic way.

Readers may want to use some of our ideas but not others within an alternative reading frame, or to supplement these with additional or alternative methodological ideas, or indeed to devise a reading frame composed by entirely different things. What is important we think is not the specific components of a reading frame, but instead that the criteria used to read and evaluate feminist research work should be made explicit and transparent, so that other people can engage, and if necessary disagree, with these.

Many people find themselves completely convinced by the last thing they have read, even when this directly conflicts with the previous thing they read and were convinced by; or else they criticise or reject work just because it departs from their pre-existing ideas and beliefs. Developing and using a reading frame, as we have done in this chapter, will provide the means of engaging in a detailed and thoughtful way with wide-ranging examples of feminist research. It will also help readers to feel more ‘in charge’ of their reading and more secure that the evaluations they make of it will do justice to what the authors have written.

Bon voyage!

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. SHOSTAK COMPARATORS

These comparators all use ethnographic or participant observation methods.

Diane Bell (1983) *Daughters of the Dreaming* London: Allan and Unwin.

Topic: Explores Australian aboriginal women's importance in religious and ritual aspects of their society.

Methodology: A feminist anthropological ethnography of the late 1970s, where Bell lived in Warrabri in Australia for over two years, with her presence treated as part of the fieldwork dynamics. Women's and men's roles in ritual are kept secret from each other, so the problems of researching this are discussed, while the acknowledged importance of women's ritual activities is stressed.

Methodology reading: Methodology discussions are interwoven into substantive discussions in all chapters, but see in particular 'Into the Field', 7-40; 'The Problem of Women', 229-54.

Judith Stacey (1991) *Brave New Families* New York: Basic Books.

Topic: Investigates the demise of the 'modern family' in the US due to the combined impacts of post-industrialisation, postmodernity and postfeminism. Sees the 'postmodern family' (where there is no normative or dominant family form) as a transitional form.

Methodology: Calls its methodology an ethnography, but in practice combines formal interviews with participating in people's lives as a kind of acquaintance or friend. Focuses on two white women and their family/kinship networks in California's 'Silicon Valley'.

Concludes ethnography is 'far less benign or feminist than anticipated'.

Methodology reading: 'The Making and Unmaking of Modern Families', 3-19; 'Land of Dreams and Disasters', 20-38; 'Epilogue', 272-8.

Sallie Westwood (1984) *All Day Every Day* London: Pluto Press.

Topic: Investigates ‘factory and family in women’s lives’, particularly the inherent contradictions of women’s lives under patriarchal capitalism. Explores how these are played out through a shopfloor culture oppositional to management which forges bonds of solidarity and sisterhood.

Methodology: A shopfloor ethnography carried out over fourteen months in the early 1980s in ‘StitchCo’, a UK hosiery factory making jerseyknit material in which over a third of the female workforce were Asian. The methodological aspects are only briefly discussed.

Methodology reading: ‘Introduction’, 1-12.

B. RIESSMAN COMPARATORS

These comparators all produce and analyse interview data.

Jayne Ifekwunigwe (1998) *Scattered Belongings: Cultural Paradoxes of ‘Race’, Nation and Gender* London: Routledge.

Topic: Explores cultural paradoxes of ‘race’, nation and gender, in which ‘mixed race’ hybridities disrupt assumptions of binary, black or white, racialisations. Extracts from personal testimonies are placed in a ‘critical dialogue’ with extracts from cultural theories, together with brief discussion of how to theorise such identities in a global context.

Methodology: Focuses on six testimonies as ‘narratives of belongings for future generations of metis(se) children and adults in England’, from two sets of sisters and two women raised by mother surrogates. Short extracts are provided, together with ‘culled extracts’ from cultural theorists, and extracts from an ethnography Ifekwunigwe did in a Bristol, UK,

community.

Methodology reading: 'Prologue' xii-xiv; 'Returning(s): the critical feminist auto-ethnographer', 29-49; 'Setting the stage' 50-61; 'Let blackness and whiteness wash through', 170-93.

Ann Oakley (1974) *The Sociology of Housework* London: Martin Robertson.

Topic: Part of Oakley's larger study of housewives in early 1970s London. Treats housework as 'a job' which can be researched like paid employment, carried out in the context of the then 'invisibility' of women within sociological research of the early 1970s.

Methodology: Forty interviews carried out (with black and Indian women removed to make the sample 'more homogeneous') with a sample drawn from middle and working class women with at least one child under 5. Utilises similar measurement techniques to those for researching occupational groups, proxy measures to produce dis/satisfaction scales, and a 'ten statement test' to assess women's 'domestic role identity' and questions about 'who am I?'.

Methodology reading: 'Description of Housework Study', 29-40; 'Conclusions', 181-97; 'Appendix I, Sample Selection and Measurement Techniques', 198-207, 'Appendix II, Interview Schedule', 208-19.

Sarah Mirza & Margaret Strobel (eds & trans, 1989) *Three Swahili Women: Life Histories From Mombasa, Kenya* Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press.

Topic: Provides three 'narrative texts' by Swahili-speaking women from Mombasa, Kenya. At the time this and a parallel Swahili text were published, there was little published in Swahili about women. Therefore these narratives, by women of different ages and different social groups, are seen as promoting understanding of this society and change within it.

Methodology: Life history interviews were carried out in Swahili by Strobel in 1972-3 and

1975, while transcription and editing involved both researchers, resulting in what are called 'narrative texts'. The details of editing are not discussed, the involvement of the researcher and any bystanders is omitted, and the texts are smoothly edited and chronologically ordered. There is also little interpretation or comparison of content.

Methodology reading: 'Preface', ix-xi; 'Introduction', 1-14; 'Appendix', 117-21.

C. FINCH COMPARATORS

These comparators are all examples of feminist documentary analysis.

Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes* London: Routledge.

Topic: Focuses on family and gender differences in the English middle class 1780 to 1850, a period of rapid change. Moves beyond 'separate spheres' ideas, to show the public prominence of men is embedded in networks of familial and female support, and therefore it focuses on sexual divisions of labour in the family and beyond.

Methodology: Uses an archive-based methodology, only briefly discussed. Compares three locations so the analysis covers a wide spectrum of English life. In each location, research on named individuals, families and their inter-relationships is supplemented by studying a sample of wills and the dispensation of property, how the particular local communities were organized, and a sample of middle class households are investigated using 1851 Census data.

Methodology reading: 'Prologue', 13-35; 'Epilogue', 450-4.

**Hilary Lapsley (1999) *Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict: The Kinship of Women*
Amherst, USA: University of Massachusetts Press.**

Topic: A biographical study of the life-long friendship between US anthropologists Margaret

Mead and Ruth Benedict, encompassing sexuality, love and close intellectual bonds. Carried out around present-day interest in new forms of family and kinship relationships, it explores the anthropological work of each woman in the context of the central relationship with each other and their wider friendship networks.

Methodology: Only briefly discusses its archive-based methodology. Uses newly-available correspondences as well as earlier biographies and the women's own autobiographical writings. Written in a 'standard biography' form, but as a narrative of two interconnected lives, it also has a revisionist intention, influenced by feminist and lesbian studies, to emphasize the women's friendship networks.

Methodology reading: 'Introduction', 1-8.

Dorothy Smith (1999) *Writing the Social: Critique, Theory, and Investigations* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Topic: Interconnected chapters explore the intertextuality of Smith's position *as a reader*, focusing on fissures in the relations of ruling, with Smith conceiving organisational texts as material means of bringing together ruling ideas, and local settings and what people do in these. For Smith, all relations of ruling are textually-mediated and so the analysis of organizational texts is crucially important for feminist politics.

Methodology: Combines theory and methodology. Smith analytically joins up *writing* the social and *reading* the social through a six-point 'method of inquiry'. This encompasses the situated knower; the ongoing coordinated activities of the social; the 'how' of this coordination; organisational practices and the social relations they engender; avoiding a theory/practice split; recognition that texts join up local activities and the organisational relations of ruling; and that the politics of this method are foundational. Positions Smith as both subject and agent.

Methodology reading: 'Introduction', 3-12; 'Sociological Theory: Methods of Writing Patriarchy into Feminist Texts', 45-69; "'Politically Correct': An Organiser of Public Discourse', 172-94; 'Conclusion', 225-8.

D. HITE COMPARATORS

These comparators all use numbers and/or a survey approach.

Clementina Black (1915 / 1983) *Married Women's Work* (ed, Ellen Mappen) London: Virago Press.

Topic: Presents the results of a survey of married women's lives, including household as well as industrial work, carried out in many areas of Britain by members of the Women's Industrial Council. The WIC investigated the social conditions and employment circumstances of women's lives and acted as a pressure group arguing for political changes using research findings from this and other investigations.

Methodology: The methodology is a survey in the sense then current, of overviewing married women's work. The reports were written by the various investigators using a combination of individual responses, case studies and numerical data about the people interviewed in a particular area.

Methodology reading: 'New Introduction' (Ellen Mappen), i-xxi; 'Preface' (Clementina Black), xxiii-xxiv; 'Introduction' (Clementina Black), 1-15; 'Appendices', 254-83. _

Diana Gittins (1982) *Fair Sex: Family Size and Structure, 1900-39* London: Hutchinson.

Topic: Investigates why English working class family size fell sharply between 1900 and 1939. Concludes this was not due to the diffusion of middle class attitudes, as had been

assumed, but because of the impact of socio-economic factors, particularly those which enabled women to earn reasonable wages from employment and, as a consequence, helped them establish more egalitarian marriages.

Methodology: Uses three kinds of data to throw light on each other: the analysis of 1921 and 1931 Census demographics; documentary analysis of the records of an early birth control clinic; and material from thirty in-depth interviews with women of the appropriate age group.

Methodology reading: 'Preface', 9-10; 'Introduction', 11-32; 'Conclusion', 181-7; 'Appendix: The interviews', 197-20.

Diane Russell ([1982] 1990 expanded edition) *Rape in Marriage* New York: Stein and Day.

Topic: A 'breaking the silence' study of marital rape, carried out in the early 1980s context of marital rape exemption laws in many US states, and the denial of its incidence and impact.. The key finding is that around 14% of ever-married women had been raped by ex/husbands. Explores a continuum of sex and violence, and also analyses factors that can help stop marital rape.

Methodology: Set up to generalise from the study to the US population, it insists a random representative sample was essential because non-random sampling can only raise hypotheses and present exploratory thinking, but cannot test hypotheses or make valid generalizations to the whole population.

Methodology reading: 'Introduction to the New Edition', ix-xxx; 'Preface', xxxi-xxxiii; 'Acknowledgements', xxxiv-xxxviii; 'The Rape Study', 27-41; 'Why Men Rape Their Wives', 132-66.

E. HAUG ET AL COMPARATORS

These comparators all use aspects of the researcher's auto/biographies as part of the research process and also its product.

Rebecca Campbell (2002) *Emotionally Involved: The Impact of Researching Rape* New York: Routledge.

Topic: Emotions are part of all social research, especially when the topic concerns painful things: regarding *Emotionally Involved*, this involves long-term work with rape survivors. Discusses emotions, coping and knowing, with the focus on 'how to think straight' when working with pain, to gain insights into violence against women generally, and to achieve a balance between intellectual thought and human emotion within research.

Methodology: Builds on a large interview project with rape survivors and experience in a Violence Against Women Project. Its 'collective case study' involves a three-stage analysis: 'data reduction' into sections of coded text; 'data display', looking across cases for similarities and differences; and 'data interpretation', checking its credibility and meaningfulness with interviewees. Issues of feelings as well as confidentiality arose, making writing about the research difficult.

Methodology reading: 'Preface', 1-13; 'Creating Balance - Thinking and Feeling', 123-50; 'Appendix A: The Development, Process, and Methodology of the Researching-the-Researcher Study', 151-68; 'Appendix B: The Researching-the-Researcher Interview Protocol', 169-72.

R. Ruth Linden (1993) *Making Stories, Making Selves* Columbus, US: Ohio State University Press.

Topic: Provides feminist analytical explorations of the interconnections between

remembering, story-telling and self-fashioning around the Holocaust. Discusses autobiographical and ethnographic materials and Linden's many interviews with survivors, to explore how selves and times are fashioned through the times, places and audiences of story-telling.

Methodology: A montage bringing together Linden's 200 plus interviews with death camp survivors and ethnographic examinations of her lived experience and interpretations of survivors' stories. Rejects treating people's memory in terms of failed referentiality and instead emphasises its synchronic truth. Also insists that writing is central to methodology, including to interpretation, and this needs to be fully recognised.

Methodology reading: The whole book disrupts any theory / methodology separation, but in particular see: 'Preface', ix-x; 'Prologue', 1-11; 'Bearing Witness', 61-70; 'Reflections on "Bearing Witness"', 70-83; 'Reflections on "The Phenomenology of Surviving"', 103-12.

Carolyn Steedman (1986) *Landscape For a Good Woman* London: Virago.

Topic: Analytically interrogating the disruptive narratives of her own childhood, including those told in her mother's stories. These 'secret stories' of lives lived on the class and gender borderlands of dominant culture are re-interpreted in a way that eschews notions of a 'real biographical past' while also insisting on people's real lives and experiences.

Methodology: A case study at the boundaries of biography and autobiography with history. Because these 'real lives' and the theories that explain them are disjunctural, a narrative methodology is used to disrupt canonical facts by confronting them with the stories of working class women and girls.

Methodology reading: The entire book is both methodology and theory, but see: 'Stories', 5-24; 'Childhood for a Good Woman', 140-4.

F. BUTLER COMPARATORS

These comparators are all examples of pro/feminist theorising.

R.W. Connell (2005 new edition) *Masculinities* Cambridge: Polity.

Topic: Argues that different masculinities are associated with different configurations of power and different social locations and social practices. Discusses historical changes in theorising masculinities and uses the life histories of different groups of men to underpin its theorisations. Also examines whether 'hegemonic masculinity' needs reconsidering in relation to non-hegemonic forms.

Methodology: A theoretical argument stemming from the empirical research it extensively draws on. Emphasises that good argument cannot remain abstract and proposes a 'situational' approach which ties theory to specific practice/context. Uses a first person and processual authorial 'voice' in an inclusive way that takes the reader through the processes of finding out, and uses world-wide examples to illustrate the key arguments made.

Methodology reading: 'Introduction to the Second Edition', xi-xxv; 'The Science of Masculinity', 3-44; 'Introduction to Part II', 89-92.

bell hooks (1984) *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* Boston: South End Press.

Topic: Uses the margin/centre metaphor to characterize early 1980s (implicitly, US) feminist theory regarding the location of black (and other non-privileged) women. Insists a much wider set of experiences and analyses must be included within feminist theory and that feminism must be a mass movement to achieve social transformation.

Methodology: A theoretical approach based on assertion and proceeding from what it calls a 'sometimes harsh and unrelenting' critique. Generalizes to white women always dominating

‘the center’ of feminism. Sees new theory as produced by those who experience both margins and centre, a form of theoretical vanguardism. Written mainly in a first person emphatic authorial ‘voice’ and uses ‘they’, ‘we’ and ‘our’ in a largely exclusive way to mark out divisions and separations. Few examples, all US ones, are discussed.

Methodology reading: ‘Preface’, ix-x; ‘Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory’, 1-15.

Virginia Woolf (1938) *Three Guineas* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Topic: Three closely interlinked essays exploring and theorising links between the position of women, militarism and fascism. Published around the rise of fascism in Europe, the Spanish Civil War, and the widespread certainty in the UK that a wider war was going to occur.

Written as letters replying in a feminist voice to a man who had requested Woolf to donate money to a peace organization.

Methodology: Complexly mixes factual and fictional elements in a theoretical argument presented in detail to the reader (who ‘stands in for’ the man requesting the donation), for them to evaluate. Written in a first person inclusive authorial ‘voice’, with the fictional male appeal-writer directly addressed in an inquiring, sceptical but even-handed way. Argues feminism as an analytical position should not be ignored in discussions of politics and war because patriarchy is closely related to militarism and fascism.

Methodology reading: No separate discussion of methodology matters, but the first essay dazzlingly explains why they were written and how Woolf will respond to the appeal made to her; see ‘One’, 5-46.

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